

The First 4 Weeks Postpartum: The Mother's Breastfeeding Concerns and Support
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Objective: The first four weeks postpartum are critical for establishing successful breastfeeding because many women wean or stop exclusive breastfeeding during this time. This study explored the breastfeeding concerns of mothers during the first 4 weeks postpartum and the support sought for those concerns.

Design: A qualitative approach was used.

Participants: Four mothers, recruited from central Indiana in 2014 through social media or word of mouth participated in the study. Inclusion criteria were women in their first four to six weeks postpartum, delivered full term healthy babies and were discharged from the hospital breastfeeding.

Methods: Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted and data were analyzed using content analysis. Interview transcripts were first coded. Codes with similar meaning were grouped into categories. Categories sharing similar features were again collapsed into common themes.

Results: Concerns identified by mothers fell into the themes: Infant breastfeeding difficulties (latch), breast complications related to breastfeeding (pain and nipple trauma), and maternal concerns related to milk production (infant milk intake and milk supply). Four common themes of support were identified that mothers utilized to alleviate concerns: Professional support, informational support, peer support, and family support.

Conclusions: Mothers identified concerns related to themselves and their infants with respect to breastfeeding in the first four weeks postpartum. These concerns indicate the women's struggle with establishing a successful breastfeeding pattern and one that is compromised by infant latch difficulty, nipple pain and inadequate milk production. Support was sought at multiple levels from health care professionals to social media. The findings suggest that support from health care professionals who provide valuable information is important. However, postpartum women also utilize other support methods when encountering breastfeeding concerns in the first four weeks postpartum. When developing interventions to assist postpartum women with establishing breastfeeding outside of the hospital setting, nurses need to consider using social media and social networks as resources for breastfeeding information and support.